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ABSTRACT

A response is given to the recommendation of the Georgia Governor's Education Review Commission that the grade point average (GPA) requirements for admission to undergraduate teacher education programs in Georgia be raised from the present 2.5 to 2.7. Brief summaries are presented of five studies dealing with the relationship of GPA for admission to teacher education to quality of teaching. A discussion is also offered on the recommendation that the GPA requirement for admission to administrator preparation programs be raised from the present 2.5 on undergraduate work to 3.0. Twelve negative comments are presented on recommendations to raise the GPA requirements for admission to both teacher education and administrator preparation programs, and it is concluded that no changes should be made until six specific conditions are met. (JD)

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COMMENTS ON GRADE POINT AVERAGE FOR ADMISSION TO TEACHER AND ADMINISTRATOR PREPARATION PROGRAMS

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Teacher Education

Background paper and report of the ERC. The Governor's Education Review Commission (ERC), based on the recommendation of its Personnel Committee, has recommended that the grade point average (GPA) requirement for admission to undergraduate teacher education programs be raised from the present 2.5 to 2.7.

In Draft #10 (October 1, 1984) of a paper entitled "Issue III-3, Sub-issue 1: What constitutes a quality teacher preparation program?" the Personnel Committee had these things to say about grade point average for admission to teacher education:

> "Doyle Watts, Director of Teacher Education at Northwestern Oklahoma State University, cites four general criteria for admission to teacher education programs: overall grade point average, grade point average in major field, grade in English composition and faculty recommendations. Dr. Watts calls these 'meager standards, established at wretchedly inadequate levels or administered in such a careless fashion as to be literally useless.'" (No citation is given for this statement.)
>
> "The National Center for Education Statistics reported. . .[that] most institutions (96.8%) were using the grade point average as a major criterion." [No citation is given for this statement.]
>
> "A 1982 regional survey. . .[in the south] showed that 92% [of 84 colleges and universities] use the grade point average as the major criterion." (No citation is given for this statement; possibly from "Meeting the Need for Quality: Action in the South." Progress Report to the Southern Regional Education Board, Atlanta, June 1983.)
>
> "General Findings. . .2. The most frequently used criteria for admission to undergraduate professional educational programs in Georgia are grade point average. . . ."

These statements led to the following recommendation:

"2. . .a. increase the required minimum grade point average from 2.5 to 2.7."

It hardly seems that the recommendation follows from the statements given. What does the research show about the relationship of grade point average at the point of admission to teacher education to the quality of teaching when the teacher gets on the job?

Research on grade point average for admission to teacher education. A computer search of the ERIC system was performed for entries included in recent years. Six citations were located that dealt with the relationship of grade point average for admission to teacher education to quality of teaching. Upon inspection, one of these did not in actuality deal with the subject at hand. A summary of the remaining five follows:

1. Donald K. Cobb, et al., "Selecting Teachers: An Effective Model." Paper presented at the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, San Antonio, 1984. ED 241 464.

In Kentucky, there are multiple criteria for undergraduate admission to teacher education, including a GPA of 2.0 (on a 4.0 scale). All institutions in Kentucky use the 2.0 GPA criterion, with the exception of the University of Northern Kentucky, which uses a 2.2 GPA.

In 1982-83, the average GPA of all applicants to teacher education in Kentucky was 2.90; the GPA of those admitted was 3.00. For whatever reasons, 16.7% of those admitted had a GPA of less than 2.50. Similarly, more than 28% of those not admitted had a GPA of more than 2.75. (Obviously, in Kentucky, factors other than GPA either permit a person with a low GPA to compensate in other ways or prevent a person with a high GPA from being admitted.)

As a result, it appeared that any sort of state-wide standard was, if not meaningless, at least of limited value, given the different practices among institutions and disciplines with which a given student might be involved.

The authors also summarized a number of earlier studies. They reported a 1973 national study by Carpenter where it was found that 48% of the institutions used a 2.0 or lower GPA; 31.5% used a 2.21-2; 13.5% used 2.26-2.5; and the remainder either did not use the GPA or had a higher one. Also cited was Barnes, Blaisdell, and Hill (1977) who reported that no admission criterion, including a grade point average, was significantly related to success, as measured by success in student teaching. The same finding was reported by Haberman (1976), Wiseman (1973), and Brodbelt (1973). The only contrary finding was that of Eash and Rasher (1977), who found the GPA was a significant success predictor.

3. J. Foster Watkins and Ronnie L. Stanford, "ACT Scores and Selective Admissions: An Exploratory Look at Some One-Time Data." Paper presented at the Association for Teacher Educators, Orlando, 1983.

The University of Alabama uses a GPA of 1.2 (on a 3.0 scale) [a bit over "C" average] for admission to teacher education. The Alabama Initial Teacher Certificaion Test [somewhat similar to the TCT in Georgia] has two major components, the Basic Professional Skills (BP) and the Teaching Field (TF). Watkins and Stanford found a correlation of .45 between the GPA and the BF (n=150) and a correlation of only .21 between the GPA and the TF (n=82).

4. One study merely reported the forms and processes used at Wright State University. That institution uses a GPA of 2.25 (on a 4.0 scale).

5. Archie E. Laman and Dorothy E. Reeves, "A Survey of Criteria for Admitting Students to Teacher Education Programs." 1982. ED 220 433

Those with GPA's between 2.5 and 2.74 constituted 17.1% of those admitted and 14.0% of those not admitted.

The Kentucky legislature had before it a proposal to raise the minimum GPA to 2.50. It was estimated that this would have the effect of eliminating 16.7% of all teacher education students in that state.

The 2.2 GPA requirement in Kentucky gave the result of 53% of those admitted to teacher education having an ACT score above the 50th percentile.

2. Carol Barnes and Dennis S. Tierney, "California's Problems in Operationalizing the Quest for Quality in Teacher Education." Paper presented at the American Education Research Association, Montreal, 1983. ED 235 172.

All but one of the public institutions in California use a 2.5 or higher GPA for admission to teacher education. Among the private institutions in California, there is a range from 2.0 to 3.0 with a mean of 2.6.

The average letter grade awarded by various California institutions ranged from 2.62 (San Diego) to 3.07 (Sonoma), with a mean of 2.76. It was also found to make a considerable difference as to what the student had taken prior to admission to teacher education, as department/discipline average GPA's ranged from 2.99 for foreign language students to 2.56 for engineering, with a mean of 3.69.

The authors constructed a table showing the difference between the mean campus GPA and that institution's GPA admisson requirement for teacher education. These ranged from -0.40 (Dominguez Hills) to -0.12 (San Diego). From this, the authors constructed a 2x2 matrix as follows:

Tough Campus Tough Major	Tough Campus Easy Major
Easy Campus Tough Major	Easy Campus Easy Major

In 1982 the authors constructed a stratified sample of institutions that were members of the AACTE and submitted to each a questionnaire about admissions practices. The number returned and usable was 121. They found that only 4.5% of the institutions has a GPA for admission to teacher education of 2.70 or higher. The mean was 2.25, the median was 2.20-2.25, and the mode was 2.50-2.55.

Administrator Preparation

Background paper and report of the ERC. The Governor's Education Review Commission, based on the recommendation of its Personnel Committee, has recommended that the grade point average requirement for admission to administrator preparation programs be raised from the present 2.5 (2.2 for provisional admission) on undergraduate work to 3.0.

In Draft #2 (August 14, 1984) of a paper entitled "Objective IV-Issue 3, Sub-issue 1, What constitutes a quality school leadership preparation program?" the Personnel Committee had these things to say about grade point average for admission to administrator preparation programs:

> "There is a high similarity of requirements for entrance into the 11 Georgia programs in Educational Administration at the master's level: . . .b. minimum undergraduate grade point average--2.5 (exceptions--University of Georgia, 2.6; Atlanta University and Emory University, 3.0 in area of concentration; effective Fall, 1984 a 2.75 g.p.a. will be required for admission to M.Ed. programs at Columbus College)." [No citation is given for this statement.]
>
> "Generally a 3.5 or 'B' grade point average is required in the 'exemplary' institutions [12 institutions identified by the executive officers of the AACTE, AASA, NAESP and NASSP] while most of the Georgia institutions require a 2.5 (exceptions: University of Georgia, 2.6; Atlanta and Emory, 3.0)." [Note: A "B" GPA would not be a 3.5, but a 3.0]. [No citation is given for this statement.]

"Additionally all Georgia institutions. . .have provisional admission criteria. . .which are substantially lower than regular admission to these programs. The following chart depicts the discrepancies:

	Regular Admission Criteria	Provisional Admission Criteria
Minimum G.P.A.	2.5	2.2"

These statements led to the following recommendations:

"Recommendations:. . .3. . .a. require minimum grade point average in undergraduate studies of "B" or 3.0."

Again, it hardly seems that the recommendation follows from the statements given, except to bring Georgia institutions into line with the alleged practices of a group of 12 institutions identified by four association executives.

Research on grade point average for admission to administrator preparation. The computer search of the ERIC system performed for entries included in recent years revealed no entries having to do with the relationship of grade point average for admission to administrator preparation to quality of leadership.

Discussion

Summary. Most teacher education institutions consider the applicant's grade point average as part of the process of admission to either an undergraduate teacher education program or a graduate program in educational administration. Most institutions have a floor, typically around 2.25, for undergraduate admissions, but use the GPA as one of several criteria for admission. The present requirement for public institutions in Georgia is 2.5.

So-called "exemplary" institutions are said to use a GPA of 3.0 for admission to administrator preparation programs. (No information is given about any "provisional" admission practices that such institutions may have.)

The Governor's Education Review Committee is proposing that the undergraduate GPA for admission to teacher education be raised to 2.7 and that the total undergraduate GPA for admission to administrator preparation programs be raised to 3.0 from the present 2.5 (2.2 for provisional admission).

Comment.

1. No research was cited by the ERC to the effect that raising the GPA requirement from 2.5 to 2.7 would produce "better" teachers. No research to this effect has been located by the author, with one exception from several years ago. On the other hand, four studies found no significant relationship between "success" and GPA. The ERC staff did not report recent research on the subject.

2. "Admission to teacher education" is not well defined. At some institutions, this may be at about the end of the sophomore year, where the GPA to be examined is primarily derived from "core" courses, but from an appreciable number of courses in the major field and/or a number of courses in professional education. At the present time, it is generally left to institutional discretion as to the point at which admission to teacher education must occur.

3. As in California, grading practices differ considerably among institutions in Georgia. The University System regularly reports a matrix of grade point averages for students who transfer from one institution to another. These matrices clearly and consistently show that grading practices are relatively lenient at some institutions and relatively strict at others. Thus, a student who transferred at, say, the end of the sophomore year from a "strict" institution to a "lenient" institution would be at a considerable

disadvantage over a student of equal ability who transferred from a "lenient" institution to a "strict" institution. (The same argument holds for "native" students going through all four years at an institution compared with students who transfer into that institution).

4. As in California, in Georgia grading practices differ considerably among disciplines even in the same institution. At some institutions in the state, the office of institutional research from time to time reports average grade point averages by discipline/department. The student who has taken an appreciable amount of "hard/tough-grading" courses prior to the time of admission to teacher education is going to be at a disadvantage over an otherwise equally-qualified student who has taken an appreciable amount of "easy/lenient grading" courses prior to the time of admission to teacher education.

5. No research was cited by the ERC to the effect that raising the requirement from 2.5 to 3.0 would produce "better" administrators. No research to this effect has been located by the author.

6. Grading practices differ considerably among institutions. There are data to show that a graduate from a highly selective, "tough grading" in- or out-of-state institution would be at a disadvantage coming into an administrator preparation program over an otherwise equally qualified student who had graduated from a non-competitive, "easy-grading" institution.

7. Grading practices differ considerably among majors. Traditionally and generally, grading is "tougher" in, say, physics than it is in, say, elementary education. Thus, the person with an undergraduate degree in physics is going to be at a disadvantage in admission to an administrator preparation program

over an otherwise equally-qualified person with an undergraduate major in elementary education.

8. The ERC does not make specific whether it is talking about grade point average increases for admission to administrator preparation programs only at the master's level or, where applicable, to the specialist and doctoral levels as well.

9. Practices in Georgia public institutions are not out of line with prevailing practices over the country with respect to the GPA required for admission to undergraduate teacher education programs. In fact, the present standard, which has been in place for only a short period of time, appears to be higher than prevailing practices across the country. Data are not available as to prevailing practices for admission to administrator preparation programs.

10. No external agency requires a specific GPA for admission to undergraduate teacher education or to administrator preparation programs for accreditation or other such recognition. None of the in-state surveys cited by the ERC having to do with the content and structure of administrator preparation programs made reference to the need for higher GPAs for admission. No professional association related to undergraduate teacher education or administrator preparation has any requirements for grade point average for admission to the relevant program.

11. The ERC does not make clear whether it is intended for the GPAs to apply only to public institutions or to both public and private. If only public institutions, why are the private institutions excluded from the

requirement? If both public and private institutions are to be included, how are the requirements to be made binding on the private institutions?

12, The recommendations of the EAC concerning GPA for admission to undergraduate teacher education and administrative preparation programs appear to have no basis in research (in fact, contrary to some research); prevailing practice (with the exception of the alleged practices of 12 "exemplary" administration programs) (in fact, contrary to prevailing practice in undergraduate teacher education); external standards/requirements/expectations by recognized professional organizations/agencies, or any other such basis. Further, they fail to take into account differences among hours to be counted, disciplines included, and institutional standards of practice. Therefore, they appear to be quite arbitrary and some other set of requirements--either higher or lower would have equal validity. To be sure, the present requirements lack basis, other than being closer to prevailing practice, and they,too, are suspect in their validity.

Recommendations

Because of the lack of basis for the recommendations and the thus apparent arbitrariness of the recommendations of the Education Review Commission concerning grade point averages for admission to undergraduate teacher education programs and certain unspecified graduate programs for the preparation of educational administrators, the teacher education community of Georgia should resist any changes in the present requirements concerning grade point average until the following can be accomplished:

1. There is a definition of how many hours and what courses are to be used for the calculation of the GPA for admission to teacher education and what

hours, if any, may be excluded (i.e., course work more than X years old, courses repeated, credit given by examination, "life experience" credits, etc.), such definition to be used uniformly by all institutions.

2. There is a determination of what GPA, used either as a single criterion/screening device or as one of multiple criteria, provides a differentiation between "successful" and "less successful" teachers or prospective teachers. There first will have to be defined or determined the measure of "success".

3. A formula is established, not unlike the present formula computed annually by the staff of the Board of Regents for admission to institutions in the University System of Georgia. (Because of differing practices in freshmen-level course grading at the various public institutions, it takes a different value produced by the formula, which includes high school grade point average and SAT score, to predict a certain level of freshman year success.) Such a formula would likely produce a different GPA for each institution as a predictor of some predetermined measure of success as a teacher.

4. Determinations comparable to 1-3 above are made for admission to administrator preparation programs.

5. There is definition as to whether the established GPA for administrator preparation programs applies only to master's degrees or to all graduate degree levels.

6. There is a determination of whether the GPA criteria are to be applicable only to public institutions or to both public and private institutions, of how whatever is determined is to be implemented, and of the rationale for that course of action.

ADDENDUM TO "COMMENTS ON GRADE POINT AVERAGE FOR ADMISSION TO TEACHER AND ADMINISTRATOR PREPARATION PROGRAMS"

The institutions cited as "exemplary" by the Personnel Committee of the Education Review Commission in its review of administrator preparation programs and their admissions practices are: University of California-Berkeley, Teachers College Columbia University, University of Florida, Harvard University, University of Illinois, New York University, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, The Ohio State University, University of Texas, University of Utah, University of Washington, and the University of Wisconsin.

Of these, only the University of Florida, University of Illinois, New York University, The Ohio State University, University of Texas, University of Utah, and University of Wisconsin are members of the University Council on Educational Administration, a quasi accrediting organization for programs in educational administration.

How it was determined that these "exemplary" institutions in general required a "B" average in undergraduate work for admission to an administrator preparation program is not at all clear.

For example, Harvard University does not have any specific grade point average for admission to its administrator preparation programs, according to the "Admissions Information and Procedures" section of the 1984-1985 catalog of the Harvard University Graduate School of Education. In fact, this catalog states that "Admissions decisions are based on an evaluation of all materials submitted in support of the application." Further, "High test scores and academic record alone do not ensure admission. Other kinds of significant achievement, including the overcoming of economic, societal, or educational obstacles or outstanding public service in education, are also considered." [emphasis added]

As another example, the University of Illinois, according to the 1984-1985 Graduate Programs Handbook, does have the statement that "The Graduate College has established a minimun [sic] grade-point average of 4.0 (A = 5.0) for admission." However, two sentences later, the Handbook states that "If the applicant's grade-point average is below 4.0, the Graduate College requires a letter of justification written by the executive officer of the student's major area of graduate study." [emphasis added]

Further, and more important, there follows the statement that "the grade-point average is computed for the last two years of undergraduate study. This normally includes approximately the last 60 semester hours. . . ." [emphasis added]

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